

8

Napoleon: Consulate and Empire

POINTS TO CONSIDER

After the *Coup* of Brumaire Napoleon was appointed First Consul. His enormous ambition combined with support from the military and a belief that he was fulfilling the goals of the revolution drove him to seize power for himself. He sought to establish an empire that would challenge the established powers of Europe. During the course of this attempt Europe was plunged into one of the most protracted and bloody conflicts in its history to that date. This chapter will cover four broad themes:

- The Napoleonic system in France
- The establishment of the Napoleonic Empire
- The creation of the Napoleonic Empire in Europe
- The defeat and downfall of the empire

Key dates

1799	November 10	<i>Coup</i> of Brumaire
1801	July 15	Signing of the Concordat with the Pope
1802	March 27	Peace of Amiens
1803	May 18	Start of the Napoleonic War
1804	March 21	Civil Code issued
	March 20	Murder of the Duc d'Enghien
	May 18	Napoleon declared Emperor of the French
1805	October 21	Battle of Trafalgar
1808	May 5	Forced abdication of the King of Spain
		Start of Peninsular War
1812	June 22	Napoleon invaded Russia
1815	June 18	Battle of Waterloo

1 | The Napoleonic System in France

The successful conclusion of the *coup* was only the beginning for Napoleon. He had gained political power, but needed to consolidate it if he were to make himself undisputed ruler of France. He began with the constitution.

The constitution of 1799

Late in the evening of 19 Brumaire year VIII (10 November 1799) the three newly elected provisional consuls (Napoleon, Sieyes and Ducos) swore an oath of allegiance to the Republic. From their base in the Luxembourg Palace in Paris the consuls set to work on the new constitution, bypassing the two Standing Committees that were supposed to draw up the draft plans. In a series of long and often heated discussions Sieyes' proposed that Napoleon should occupy the role of a figurehead in the new constitution. Napoleon refused to countenance the idea. There must, he argued, be a First Consul as head of state with complete control, in peace and in war, at home and abroad; and *he* must be that consul. The roles of the second and third consuls also caused argument. Sieyes wanted them each to have *voix deliberative* (the right to one of three equal votes). Napoleon, however, insisted they should have only *voix consultative* (the right merely to express an opinion). In all matters his decision would be final. Faced with Napoleon's domineering personality, Sieyes was eventually forced into the humiliating position of having to make the official nomination of Napoleon as First Consul. After six weeks of negotiations the government of France was transformed from one where political responsibility was spread as widely as possible to one where it was centralised in the hands of a single man. All three consuls would serve initially for 10 years.

In a proclamation, Napoleon explained his reasons for seizing power: 'To make the Republic loved by its own citizens, respected abroad and feared by its enemies – such are the duties we have assumed in accepting the First Consulship' and he added reassuringly '... that the new constitution was based upon the true principles of representative government and on the sacred rights of property, equality and liberty. The powers it sets up will be strong and lasting.'

The new constitution provided for 'universal suffrage', unlike the property-based vote of the 1795 constitution, but this suffrage was so indirect as to be of little significance in relation to the idea of **popular sovereignty**. The references to a constitution based on representative government were merely words. Democratic involvement in the elections was minimal. While there was the appearance of adult male suffrage, there were no *elections*, only *presentations* of candidates suitable for appointment as deputies, and the choice of candidates was restricted to notables. The structure of the new constitution is shown in Figure 8.1.

The distribution of power during the Consulate

Power was firmly in the hands of one man (the First Consul), who stood alone at the top of the political pyramid. The Senate, which had been intended by Sieyes to act as a brake on the executive, became under Napoleon's leadership an instrument of his personal power. It was intended to be the guardian of the existing constitution, but was also able to amend it by a legal procedure

Key questions

What were the main features of the new constitution?

Was the constitution based on representative government?

Coup of Brumaire:
10 November 1799

Key date

Popular sovereignty

The idea that the people should exercise control over their government, usually by directly electing a representative assembly.

Key term

Key question

How was power distributed during the Consulate?

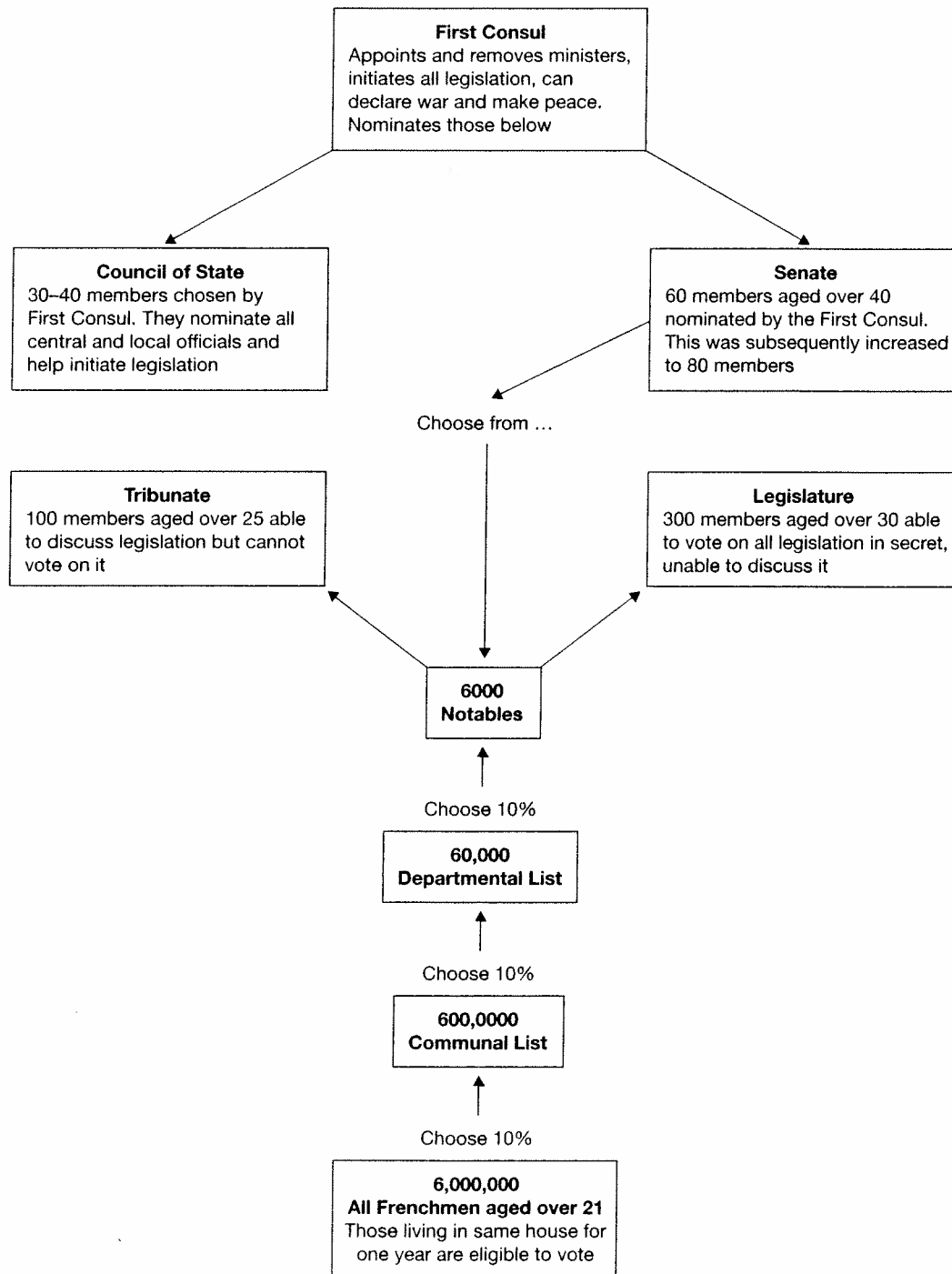


Figure 8.1: Summary of the key features of the constitution of Year VIII (1799)

known as *senatus-consultum*. It was this procedure that Napoleon used extensively from January 1801 onwards in order to block the wishes of the Tribunate and the Legislature. Senators were appointed for life, with a substantial salary, were suitably rewarded with gifts of land and money, and enjoyed considerable prestige. Membership of the Senate increased from the original 80 to about 140 by 1814, most of the addition members being Napoleon's direct nominees or 'grand signatories' of the Empire, used to fill up the Senate. As a result it developed into a largely consultative body anxious to please its benefactor and president, Napoleon.

The new constitution was submitted for approval in a plebiscite held in February 1800. Official results showed 3,011,007 voting in favour with 1562 against. A number of these plebiscites were held over the next 15 years as an attempt to seek popular approval for significant changes, as shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Plebiscites held during the Consulate and Empire 1800–15

Year	Purpose of plebiscite	Voting yes	Voting no
1800	Constitution of Year VIII	1,550,000*	1562
1802	Plebiscite on Life Consulate	3,653,000	8272
1804	Plebiscite on Empire	3,572,329	2569
1815	Plebiscite on <i>Acte Additionnel</i>	1,552,942	5740

* Revised figure.

In a number of ways the constitution established a framework for consolidating the main social changes brought about by the Revolution. Among the most important of these changes was the vast transfer of land that had taken place largely at the expense of the Catholic Church, but also from the nobility. It was necessary to bind the beneficiaries of these transfers to the new regime. This was achieved by creating a political system which favoured the well-off propertied classes. Power in the new regime was far more centralised than it had been under the Directory, in a way it was a reversion back to the Jacobin phase of the Revolution (1793–4) when France was governed by a dictatorship (see pages 106–8). By cultivating the support of notables Napoleon was seeking to incorporate and consolidate the new élite of talent and property that had emerged since 1789.

From Consul to Emperor

Napoleon only narrowly escaped assassination in December 1800, making the Senate anxiously aware of the fragile nature of a regime dependent for its continuation on one man. Partly because of this, and partly as a demonstration of gratitude to the First Consul for his achievements at home and abroad, it was decided to offer him the Consulship for life, with the right to nominate his successor. It was the first step towards the re-introduction of hereditary rule. Napoleon accepted and the decision was approved by plebiscite. (See Table 8.1 above.) While there is no evidence that the central government tampered directly with the figures, it is known that local officials often sent

Senatus-consultum

A procedure giving the Senate rights to preserve and amend the constitution and to agree major constitutional changes Napoleon wished to introduce independently of the legislative body.

Key term

Key question

Why did the Consulship give way to the Empire?

in results that they thought would be pleasing to their superiors, sometimes even recording a unanimous 'yes' vote when, in fact, no poll at all had been held.

Following the plebiscite, Napoleon's personal power increased immediately through his control of an enlarged Senate, which became responsible for everything not provided for by the constitution, and necessary to its working. This arrangement greatly reduced the power of the representative bodies, the Tribune and the Legislature. They lost much of their importance, and met less frequently. The Tribune was severely purged in 1802 for daring to criticise the proposed Civil Code (see page 194), and with a much reduced membership became little more than a rubber stamp for the remainder of its existence, while the Legislature's credibility was reduced by being 'packed' by Napoleon with 'safe' men who would not oppose his wishes.

Key question
How did Napoleon deal with potential rivals?

Key term

Legion of Honour
A high status organisation created by Napoleon to bind powerful men to his regime through granting them titles and rewards.

Key dates

Murder of the Duc d'Enghien: 20 March 1804

Napoleon declared Emperor: 18 May 1804

Consolidating power

By 1803 Napoleon was riding in splendour around Paris and holding court in royal style. State ceremonies multiplied, etiquette was formalised, and official dress became more elaborate. The **Legion of Honour** (see page 193) had been introduced the previous year and there were hints that a nobility was to be re-established, the rumours fired by Napoleon's permission for a large number of *émigrés* to return to France. In 1804 a series of disasters, royalist plots and counter-plots culminated in the affair of the Duc d'Enghien; a member of the Bourbon royal family alleged to be involved in a plot to overthrow Napoleon by murdering him and taking over the government. The Duke was kidnapped on Napoleon's orders while on neutral territory, tried and, on rather inadequate evidence, found guilty of conspiracy. He was executed quickly in what amounted to judicial murder, justified by Napoleon on the grounds that he was entitled by the Corsican laws of vendetta to kill an enemy who threatened his personal safety.

In the wake of these events Napoleon began to prepare the people for his next step. There was widespread talk of making the Consulship hereditary within the Bonaparte family, in the hope of providing for a smooth succession and the survival of the constitution should Napoleon meet an untimely death. Then, in May 1804, a formal motion was approved by the Senate that 'Napoleon Bonaparte at present First Consul be declared Emperor of the French, and that the imperial dignity be declared hereditary in his family'. A third plebiscite held in November 1804 approved the change. Remembering that 40 per cent of the army vote two years earlier had rejected the proposal, the government took no chances this time and did not actually poll the soldiers. They simply added in approximately half a million 'yes' votes on their behalf.

To seal the transformation of the Consulship to that of a hereditary ruler, Napoleon planned a spectacular coronation to be held at Notre Dame on 2 December 1804. In the presence of the Pope, Napoleon, as previously arranged, crowned himself

Emperor then crowned Josephine as Empress. During the next two or three years the Tribunate and the Legislature were hardly consulted at all. The Tribunate was finally abolished in 1808 and, although the Legislature survived, it was only able to do so by maintaining its subservient attitude to Napoleon's demands. Government was increasingly conducted through the Senate and the Council of State, both of which were firmly under Napoleon's personal control.



Napoleon on the Imperial Throne by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres
painted in 1806

All that remained to establish the Napoleonic dynasty securely was the production of a legitimate son and heir. In the years following his coronation it became increasingly obvious that an ageing Josephine was unable to provide him with an heir. Despite his continued fondness for her, Napoleon decided that a divorce was essential. He needed to persuade the Church to grant this. This was not easy, for although their original marriage had been a civil one, the Church had insisted on a second, Catholic, ceremony as a necessary preliminary to the coronation in 1804. Eventually by 1810 on the grounds of alleged irregularities in the conduct of the religious marriage, the Church unwillingly agreed to an annulment, leaving Napoleon free to remarry. A list of 18 eligible princesses was drawn up for him and later that year, at the age of 40, he married Marie Louise of Austria, a niece of Marie Antoinette. In the following year the hoped-for son and heir, Napoleon, King of Rome, was born. The succession seemed assured, the dynasty secure.

Key questions

What measures were taken to establish financial stability? To what extent were they successful?

Key term

Franc

On 7 April 1795 the Convention introduced the silver franc as the official unit of currency replacing the *livre*.

Maintaining power

Establishing financial stability

Of the many problems confronting the new government possibly the most pressing was the need to establish financial stability and secure an adequate revenue stream. There were only a few thousand **francs** available in the treasury in November 1799. Napoleon introduced a series of major financial reforms that went a considerable way to transforming the situation. As Napoleon lacked the technical skills to overhaul the financial system, he appointed a number of very able and efficient ministers to undertake this task. Among the key appointments were Gaudin as minister of finances in 1799 (a position he retained until 1814), and Barbé-Marbois at the treasury (1801–6). Both these appointments brought a measure of stability to state finances.

The early financial reforms introduced were:

- A much clearer division of roles between the ministry of finances (which oversaw collection of taxes and revenues) and the treasury (which dealt with government expenditure).
- The reorganisation of both direct and indirect tax collection.
- The first steps in establishing a public banking system.

One of Gaudin's most important reforms was to remove the assessment and collection of direct taxation from the control of local authorities and form a central organisation to undertake the task. The main source of government revenue continued to be the land tax. A much more detailed tax register detailing those eligible to pay was drawn up. More efficient land registers listing ownership helped to ensure that the amount paid was spread more evenly. Although the system was reformed and stabilised the amount raised remained fairly steady at some 250 million francs a year until 1813, which represented 29 per cent of government revenue.

A more dramatic increase in revenue came from indirect taxes. Many of these had been abolished by the Constituent Assembly.

However, faced with mounting deficits the Directory had reintroduced indirect taxes on certain goods. Napoleon centralised the collection of duties by creating a central excise office in 1804. Among the goods and services taxed were tobacco, alcohol, items made from gold and silver, playing cards and public transport. In 1806 salt was added to the list, which revived memories of the hated *gabelle* of the *ancien régime* (see page 5). Revenue from indirect taxes increased by over 400 per cent between 1806 and 1812 and was considered a much easier way of making up any shortfalls in government revenue from direct taxes. It is estimated that by 1813 revenue from all indirect taxes accounted for possibly 25 per cent of the government's revenue.

One of the most important reforms introduced by Napoleon (that still survives to this day) was the creation of the Bank of France in 1800. Although the bank was a private bank with its own shareholders, it was given a range of public functions such as the sole right to issue paper notes. A risky business venture in 1805 threatened the stability of the new bank. In order to boost state finances, a scheme aimed at importing silver from Mexico to Spain and then on to France was arranged. It even involved agreement from the British! When the scheme ended in failure, Napoleon, in order to avert a more serious crisis, imposed stricter controls on the bank.

An important indicator of the financial health of a country was the stability of its currency. The inflation linked to the *assignat* was a clear reminder to Napoleon of the problems an unstable currency could pose. On 28 March 1803 he introduced the *franc de germinal* which became the basis of his monetary system. The new gold and silver coins established a standard ratio of gold to silver at 1:15.5. Each one franc coin would weigh five grams of silver. Other denominations would be minted in strict proportion to this (e.g. a five franc coin would contain 25 grams of silver and so on). This reform gave France the soundest currency in Europe at that time. It would remain the basis of France's currency for the next 120 years.

The extent to which Napoleon achieved financial stability is difficult to assess. When compared with the financial chaos of previous regimes, both the Consulate and the Empire were much more successful. The currency was stabilised, public debts were honoured and the wages of public officials and the army were paid. But while greater efficiency was brought to the government's finances, greater burdens were placed on it. State expenditure increased steadily as a result of increasing military expenditure from around 700 million francs in 1806 to over 1000 million in 1813. The widening gap between the government's income and its expenditure was made up by forcing defeated countries to pay a financial penalty. The military defeats of 1813–14 removed this source of income and marked a renewed period of instability.

Key question
What measures did Napoleon take to create a new currency?

Key question
What measures did Napoleon take to ensure support to his regime?

Key term

Patronage
The process of distributing gifts and favours in order to build up support.

Patronage and bribery

To secure his position Napoleon sought to attract and bind to his regime as many powerful political and military figures as possible. He adopted a number of strategies which appealed to people's self-interest, vanity and desire for status. He lavished gifts of money, land, titles, honours and government appointments in order to build up a strong group of powerful individuals with a clear motive for maintaining the regime in power. The main methods used were:

- The creation of the Legion of Honour by Napoleon in 1802. This was divided into 15 cohorts (groups) each comprising 350 legionaries, 30 officers, 20 commandants and seven grand officers. Recipients received a distinctive decoration and a small annual award. In the 12 years following its establishment, 38,000 awards (only 4000 of which went to civilians) were made.
- Between 1804 and 1808, new titles were created for the officials of the new imperial court. These ranged from 'grand dignatories' such as the arch-chancellor, through 'grand officers', down to lesser dignatories such as the prefects of the palace.
- Some of these titles brought with them large estates, and were bestowed on court officials and statesmen, as well as on the 18 outstanding generals who were created Marshals of France.
- In 1808 Napoleon began the creation of a new imperial nobility. All 'grand dignatories' became princes, archbishops became counts, mayors of large towns became barons, and members of the Legion of Honour were allowed to call themselves Chevaliers. If the recipient possessed a large enough annual income – 200,000 francs in the case of a duke, for instance – the titles could be made hereditary. In all, about 3500 titles were granted between 1808 and 1814, many to military figures.
- Civilians benefited from the allocation of *senatoreries*. These were grants of large country estates to members of the Senate, together with a palatial residence and an annual income of 25,000 francs to support it. Included in the grant was appointment as *préfet* (prefect) not just of the usual department but of a whole region.
- Lesser individuals also benefited from Napoleon's personal gifts. For instance, more than 5000 presents of enough money to buy a house in Paris and to live there in comfort were made to army officers, government officials and minor members of the new nobility.

Napoleon, however, seems to have realised from the beginning that bribery as a means of control was unreliable, and was not in itself enough to maintain popular support even among the recipients. Therefore, compulsion, intimidation and indoctrination all became part of the Napoleonic system of government.

Reforms and repression

The restriction of individual liberty of thought, word and deed was an important element in Napoleon's autocratic government. By numerous measures, some more subtle than others, he built up over the years a system of supervision and control described by historian Richard Cobb as 'bureaucratic repression'.

Key question

What were the main changes Napoleon made to the judicial system?

Agents of control: police and prefects

A number of changes were made to the judiciary. Judges, instead of being elected as under the Directory, were appointed by the government for life and were kept subservient and loyal by a combination of close supervision and a system of purges. A new hierarchy of judicial tribunals was set up. The Criminal, Commercial and Penal Codes were updated in a similar way to the Civil Code. In 1810 a system of arbitrary imprisonment without trial (similar to the *lettres de cachet*, see page 33) was reintroduced, although it was never extensively used, a form of house arrest being more usual.

Key question

How did prefects and the police control opposition?

The two most important agents of control were the police and the prefects. For much of the Napoleonic era the Minister of Police was Joseph Fouché. Both police and prefects had very wide-ranging powers.

- They acted as trained spies, imposed censorship, set up surveillance of possible subversives, searched for army deserters and organised raids on areas believed to be sheltering **draft dodgers** or enemy agents.
- They were assisted in the maintenance of law and order by a well-organised body of gendarmes. In 1810 there were 18,000 stationed throughout France. Reports were submitted to Napoleon daily by Fouché on the work of his department.
- They had a prefect (*préfet*) assisted by sub-prefects (*sous-préfets*) for each department. Other local officials such as mayors and all the municipal councils were nominated by the prefect. In addition to their official duties (tax collection, conscription, etc.) prefects were expected to spread propaganda, monitor public opinion in their areas and to report on any suspicious political activity. Suspects could be placed under house arrest.

Draft dodgers

Men who avoided the call to serve in the army.

Key term

With such well-organised surveillance it is not surprising that the regime met with little serious political opposition, especially as its potential leaders, notables, intellectuals and members of the bourgeoisie, were increasingly tempted into allying themselves with the government in the hope of reward.

The Civil Code

The French legal system was extremely complex with different systems operating in different parts of France. Although the Revolution had swept away many of the complexities there was considerable scope for further reform. Napoleon took an active interest in the formulation of the new Civil Code which was issued on 21 March 1804 (in 1807 it was renamed the *Code Napoléon*). Among the most important sections of the code were those

Key question

What did the Civil Code achieve?

The Civil Code was issued, renamed in 1807 the *Code Napoléon*: 21 March 1804

Key date

Key terms

Partage

An estate is divided equally among all male heirs, unlike during the *ancien régime* when the eldest male heir inherited everything.

Livret

A combined work permit and record of employment.

Le Moniteur

The official government journal.

relating to individual rights and property rights. The code recognised the legal rights of those who had benefited from the purchase of confiscated Church and noble land. This was an attempt to bind them in to maintaining the regime. The system of inheritance of an estate introduced during the revolution – **partage** – was confirmed. While the Civil Code maintained some of the most important gains of the revolution – the abolition of feudalism, the removal of the privileged position of the Catholic Church within the State, freedom of conscience and equality before the law – it was also illiberal and restrictive. Napoleon took a personal part in preparing those sections that dealt with family law. He was intent on strengthening the authority of the father and the husband, who could send an adulterous wife or defiant child to prison. Divorce, although permitted in theory, was made very difficult and expensive to obtain.

Among the codes, the most illiberal measures were those relating to the treatment of black people and workers. Slavery was reintroduced in the French colonies 'in accordance with the laws current in 1789'. All workmen were made subject to close police supervision through use of the **livret**, without which it was legally impossible to obtain a job. Like a number of Napoleon's achievements there were two sides to the Civil Code. While it acknowledged many of the gains made during the Revolution it also confirmed the reaction against the achievements of the Republic through a return to a more authoritarian and restrictive legal system.

Key question

How did Napoleon enforce censorship and propaganda?

Censorship and propaganda

Napoleon had clear expectations that the French press would deliver all official propaganda. He was very aware of their power to undermine his regime so in 1800 he reduced the number of political journals published in Paris from 73 to nine, and forbade the production of any new ones. These survivors were kept short of reliable news and were forbidden to discuss controversial subjects. Their editors were forced to rely for news on articles published in **Le Moniteur**, which were written by Napoleon or his ministers. In 1809 censors were appointed to each newspaper and a year later provincial papers were reduced to one per department. In 1811 all except four of the Parisian papers were suppressed and those that remained were made subject to police supervision.

In the wider cultural field up to 1810 reports on all books, plays, lectures and posters that appeared in Paris were sent, often daily, to Napoleon, and publishers were required to forward two copies of every book, prior to publication, to police headquarters. In 1810 a regular system of censors was set up, more than half the printing presses in Paris were shut down, and publishers were forced to take out a licence and to swear an oath of loyalty to the government. Booksellers were strictly controlled and severely punished, even with death, if found to be selling material considered subversive. Some authors were driven into exile for criticising the government, while dramatists were forbidden to

mention any historical event that might, however indirectly, reflect adversely on the present regime. Many theatres were closed down. Others operated only under licence and were restricted to putting on a small repertory of officially sanctioned plays.

Sculptors, architects and artists got off more lightly, as Napoleon utilised their talents to project his image through paintings monuments and pillars on a grand scale. Artists such as David and Ingres (see the illustrations on pages 32 and 190) were employed by Napoleon as State propagandists, depicting him as a romantic hero-figure, or the embodiment of supreme imperial authority in classical guise, often complete with toga and laurel wreath. David as 'painter to the government' was given responsibility for supervising all paintings produced in France, with particular reference to the suitability of the subject matter.

Education

Napoleon believed that there were two main functions to an education system:

- To provide the State with a ready supply of civilian officials and administrators and loyal and disciplined army officers. He intended to recruit these from among the sons of the property-owning classes.
- To bind the nation closer together: an aim that could only be fulfilled if the government took direct central control over the system.

Education for ordinary people was neglected by Napoleon as it had been during the *ancien régime* and the Revolution. All that was considered necessary was a simple 'moral education' and basic literacy and numeracy. This was provided in primary schools run by the Church, by the local community or by individuals. Napoleon often declared his belief in equal opportunities for all according to ability and irrespective of birth or wealth, what he called 'careers open to talents', but as far as education was concerned he generally failed to ensure that this was carried out in practice. He also did not consider the education of girls to be a priority. As Napoleon once said 'marriage is their destiny', and therefore they did not need to think and should not be taught to do so.

It was in the field of secondary education that Napoleon sought to make an impact. A rather ineffective system of secondary schools had been set up under the Convention: the *écoles centrales*. They lacked sufficient funding and qualified staff to make any real impact. In 1802 secondary education was brought under central government control and the *écoles centrales* were gradually replaced by *lycées*. These new schools, there would eventually be 45 in total, were staffed by instructors chosen by Napoleon himself. The State provided 6400 scholarships to these schools, of which 2400 places were for the sons of soldiers and government officials. The remaining 4000 places were to be filled by

Key question
What did Napoleon consider to be the purpose of education?

Lycées
Selective schools introduced in 1802 for educating the sons of the privileged.

competition from pupils from the best of the remaining secondary schools. In reality, the much sought-after places were almost entirely restricted to the sons of *notables*. In this highly centralised system, the government-appointed teachers would deliver a common syllabus from identical textbooks. Conditions were strict with military discipline operating. So tightly controlled was the system, that Napoleon boasted that he knew exactly what every pupil in France was studying from the time of day. The main aim of these schools was to train for France, its future civil servants and army officers.

In 1808 the Imperial University opened. It was not a university in the ordinary sense, where learning was freely carried out. Through its tightly controlled curricula its aim was to provide loyal teachers for the State secondary schools which operated only by its permission and under its authority. Total obedience was demanded by the university from its member teachers, who had to take an oath of loyalty to their superiors. Lessons were standardised, and what was taught was dictated in accordance with the needs and demands of the government.

Key question
Why did Napoleon agree the Concordat?

Religion

Since 1789 the Catholic Church and the French State had been in conflict (see pages 58–60). During the Directory there had been a revival of Catholic public worship that no government could safely have ignored or opposed. Napoleon's motives for seeking a *rapprochement* with the Pope were those of expediency. His own attitude to religion was ambivalent. Although the Napoleonic legend was to have him die in the Catholic faith, he paid it no more than lip service during his adult life. What he appreciated was the power of religion to act as the 'social bond' cementing together a divided people, and the importance of its official re-establishment in bringing an end to the schism between clergy who had sworn allegiance to the Revolution and those who had not (see pages 58–60). Religious peace would help bring political and social peace to France as Catholicism had become identified with the royalist cause and needed instead to be identified with the people as a whole.

Discussions with the papacy lasted many months before the **Concordat** was finally signed on 15 July 1801. Under the agreement:

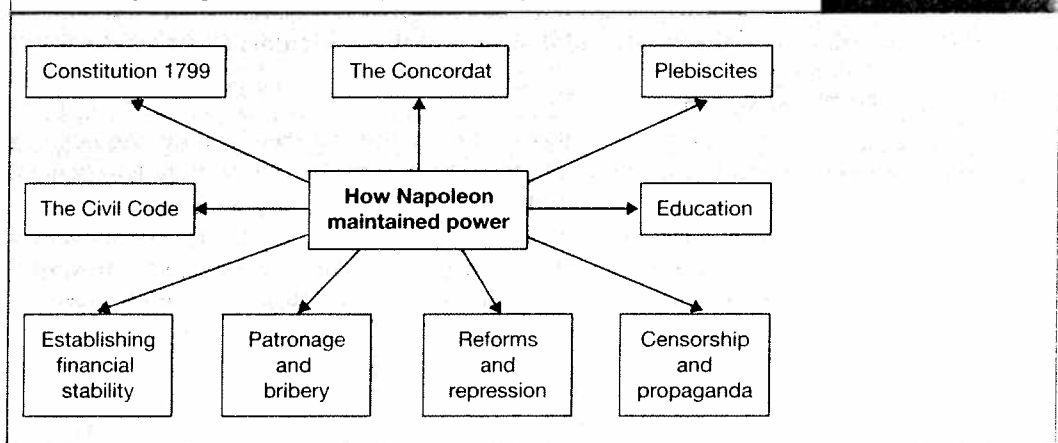
- The separation of Church and State, which had been one of the main policies of the revolution, was to end.
- The Catholic Church recognised the Revolution and agreed that no attempt would be made to recover Church lands.
- A State-controlled Church was established, and its clergy became paid civil servants, appointed by the government and bound to it by oath.
- While it was agreed that Catholic worship, should be 'freely exercised in France', it was also agreed that there would be toleration for other faiths under the Concordat.

Key date
The signing of the Concordat: 15 July 1801

Key terms
Rapprochement
The restoration of friendly relations between countries or people previously hostile.
Concordat
An agreement between Napoleon and the Pope to try and end the divisions between the Church and State.

The Concordat was published by Napoleon in April 1802 as part of a wide-ranging ecclesiastical law on to which he tacked the so-called 'Organic Articles'. These were a series of articles limiting in every possible way Papal control over the French bishops, while at the same time increasing State control over the activities of the clergy. Tensions between Church and State however remained. Napoleon angered Pope Pius VII by ordering, without reference to him, that the Church throughout the Empire should celebrate 16 August (the day after his own birthday) as St Napoleon's Day, unceremoniously removing from the calendar of saints the existing occupant of that date. The cult of the Emperor had reached its peak. It was clear that the Church was no longer the privileged First Estate it had been under the *ancien régime* with its tax exemptions and vast, landed estates. There appeared to be very little prospect that either would ever be restored.

Summary diagram: The Napoleonic system in France



2 | The Establishment of the Napoleonic Empire

Although the official birth of the Empire was on 18 May 1804, when Napoleon proclaimed himself hereditary Emperor of the French, in reality it had started its unofficial life long before then, with the Revolutionary conquests and those of the Consulate (see pages 149–54). Both of these had pushed the frontiers of 'old France' (the France of 1790) out towards its 'natural frontiers' – and beyond.

The 'Empire' is often referred to as if it were a single entity embracing all French-controlled Europe. In reality it was a more complicated arrangement than that. The French Empire, properly speaking was:

- France of the natural frontiers (Rhine, Alps, Pyrenees).
- The annexed territories (*pays réunis*, ruled from Paris) of Piedmont, Parma, Tuscany, the Papal States, the Illyrian Provinces and, after 1810, the Netherlands.

Key question

What made up the Napoleonic Empire and why was it created?

- A semicircle of nominally independent satellite states (*pays conquis*) ruled by Frenchmen, usually Bonaparte relatives, which formed a buffer zone protecting the borders of the French Empire from attack. These states, combined with the French Empire proper, formed the Grand Empire. At various times these included Switzerland, the kingdoms of Spain, Naples, and Italy, the Confederation of the Rhine (which included the kingdom of Westphalia) and until 1810, the Netherlands and the Grand Duchy of Warsaw (created out of conquered Polish lands acted as a barrier to Russian expansion into central Europe, see the map on page 204). In northern Europe, Sweden came under French influence when it was compelled to operate the continental system, and accept one of Napoleon's Marshals as heir to its throne.

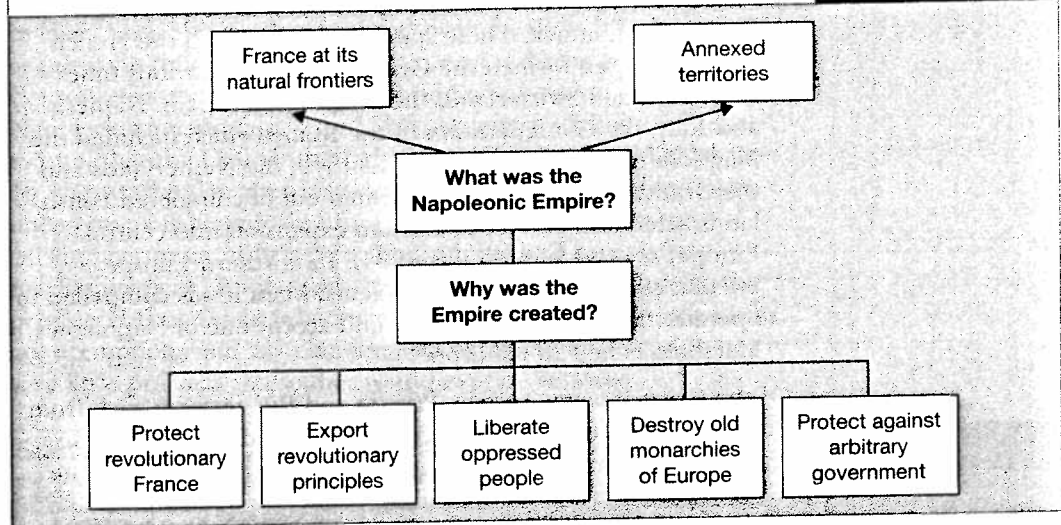
Of the Great Powers, Austria, Prussia and Russia, were each from time to time brought by military or diplomatic pressures into Napoleon's direct sphere of influence and each in turn became his ally, although not always willingly and only for a limited period. Only the Ottoman Empire and Britain, among the European powers, remained always outside Napoleon's control.

Napoleon's own explanation for the need to expand his territories was:

- to protect the territory of revolutionary France from attack by the 'old monarchies' of Europe
- to export the Civil Code, the Concordat and other benefits of Napoleonic rule to the oppressed peoples of neighbouring states
- to provide oppressed peoples with liberty, equality and prosperity
- to ensure the end of the old regimes in Europe
- to provide guarantees to citizens everywhere in the Empire against arbitrary government action.

Historians have argued at length over what really drove Napoleon to create the Empire. Some believe that Napoleon's conquests offered him opportunities to exploit the territories not only to secure his military domination, but also to reorganise the civil life of the annexed lands and that his imperial vision was a natural extension of his personal dynastic ambition. He was also determined to place as many of his close family and allies either on the thrones of newly conquered countries or to administer them (see page 214). Napoleon hoped that this would ensure complete loyalty to him. In the case of Spain this policy proved disastrous (see pages 203–6).

Summary diagram: The establishment of the Napoleonic Empire



3 | The Creation of the Napoleonic Empire in Europe

For many, the most memorable of Napoleon's achievements were his military conquests, which laid the basis of his empire in Europe. His early military successes in Italy have been noted in Chapter 6 (page 151). Following these he had taken an army to Egypt to try to disrupt British power in the eastern Mediterranean. The campaign was a failure and he returned to France and joined in the plot to overthrow the Directory (pages 156–60). The need for an early victory and a quick peace after the *coup d'état* of November 1799 in order to strengthen his own position as First Consul led Napoleon back to Italy. There in June 1800, after a march across the Alps, he inflicted a decisive defeat on the Austrians at Marengo. A further French victory at Hohenlinden in Bavaria six months later brought about the peace of Luneville. It recognised French possession of Belgium (the Austrian Netherlands) as well as the left bank of the Rhine and the gains in Italy. Austria lost control of all northern Italy, except Venetia, and its influence in Germany was reduced. With the collapse of the Second Coalition Britain agreed to the Peace of Amiens (27 March 1802), by which France withdrew from the Papal States and Naples, and Britain returned most of its conquests including Egypt, which was restored to the Ottoman Empire.

The start of the Napoleonic War

The peace settlement proved to be unstable, in effect nothing more than a truce in a war that had already been going on for almost a decade. After a period of increasingly acrimonious relations between France and Britain the war resumed once again on 18 May 1803. While France was the dominant power on land,

Key question
How successful militarily was Napoleon following his *coup d'état*?

The Peace of Amiens, which marked the end of the Revolutionary War, 1792–1802:
27 March 1802

Key date

Key question
Why did the war resume in 1803 and what was the outcome of Napoleon's plan to invade Britain?

Key dates

Start of the
Napoleonic War:
18 May 1803

Battle of Trafalgar:
21 October 1805

Britain was in clear control of the sea. Neither in itself was sufficient for victory. Napoleon tried to remedy this by planning an invasion of Britain. A large army was to be transported across the English Channel by a combined Franco-Spanish fleet. The plan failed when the Royal Navy under Nelson won a great sea battle off Trafalgar on 21 October 1805. Even before this disaster, Napoleon had gathered up his Army of England and marched south to the Danube to confront Austria, who had declared war on France during the summer.

Key questions

How significant were
the victories of
1805–7?

What was the extent
of Napoleon's
achievement by
1807?

The campaigns of 1805–7

The campaigns of 1805–7 that followed Napoleon's departure from Boulogne showed him at his military best, winning a series of crushing victories against the armies of Austria, Prussia and Russia. The Austrians were outmanoeuvred and forced to surrender at Ulm in October 1805. The defeat of an Austro-Russian army at Austerlitz in December caused Russia to retreat rapidly out of Napoleon's reach and Austria to agree to the Treaty of Pressburg, which recognised French supremacy in northern Italy and the loss of Austrian authority in Germany. Complicated negotiations between Napoleon and Prussia, involving Prussia's acquisition of Hanover in return for adherence to Napoleon's **continental system**, led to a breakdown of relations and then to war between the two countries.

In a remarkable one-week campaign Napoleon destroyed Prussia at the twin battles of Jena and Auerstadt (October 1806). In February 1807 Napoleon marched through Poland to attack Russia, his remaining continental enemy, winning a technical victory over the Russians in the bitter battle of Eylau. A major defeat at Friedland in June convinced the Russians of the need to make peace. This was done in July 1807 at Tilsit in a personal meeting between Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I that took place initially on a raft in the middle of the River Niemen, which marked the Russian frontier.

In two years (1805–7) and a series of short campaigns, Napoleon had in turn defeated three of his four opponents. In November 1806 he established the continental blockade to deal with the remaining one, Britain, who had taken no active part in the war, restricting itself to supplying allies with subsidies. Napoleon's achievements were:

- French domination in Germany by defeating Austria and abolishing the Holy Roman Empire.
- The creation of the Confederation of the Rhine as a French **satellite state**.
- The destruction of Prussian power in Poland, which was converted into the Grand Duchy of Warsaw.
- Prussia's lands in the west created into the new satellite kingdom of Westphalia.
- Napoleon crowned himself King of Italy, and added Parma and Tuscany to the existing French possessions of Piedmont and Lombardy.

Key terms

Continental system

The attempt by Napoleon to bring economic chaos to Britain by preventing its exports entering Europe.

Satellite state

A state that is subservient to another, and cannot act independently.

- Naples becoming a French satellite.
- Russia was forced to concede peace in 1807, and Tsar Alexander was compelled to make a formal alliance with France.

By the end of 1807 Napoleon controlled directly or indirectly the greater part of Europe. The 'Grand Empire' had come into being.

Military and strategic developments

During the years 1805–7 Napoleon created in essence what became the Grand Empire. On the battlefields of Europe his forces were triumphant. His victories were gained as the consequence of a number of inter-related factors. Among these were circumstances that related to him personally and those concerned with the changing nature of warfare and the opponents he faced. The most important were:

- Napoleon's leadership qualities. He was a great general who achieved important conquests in a relatively short space of time, but also knew how to exploit his victories, to extract the maximum advantage from those he defeated. French domination therefore relied on diplomatic success as well as military achievements, and the great achievement of French diplomacy was to keep the coalition powers divided.
- Through the issue of daily bulletins Napoleon formed a special bond between himself and the army. He played on the ideas of military glory, of patriotism and of comradeship, while giving at the same time the impression that he had a deep paternal concern for his men.
- Napoleon's army was a product of the Revolution which had brought into existence a mass army forged in the belief that they were spreading revolutionary ideals. His army was based on the strength of the whole nation.
- Between 1801 and 1805 Napoleon created what became the *Grande Armée*. The whole army was divided into corps of about 25,000–30,000 men each composed of two or three divisions, infantry and cavalry; some of the cavalry were kept separate, as were the reserve artillery and several élite groups, the most important of which was the Imperial Guard. He controlled the army directly, which allowed unity of command and flexibility in action. Each corps was given a particular role on a campaign march, but this role could, if necessary, be changed quickly.
- New tactics were developed which emphasised troop mobility (infantrymen were required to march 12–15 miles a day) and living off the land instead of relying on military food supplies. Although senior officers were committed to the idea of the offensive and forcing the enemy to fight, this was only resorted to after they had been outmanoeuvred.
- From 1805 onwards he developed the use of war as *une bonne affaire* ('a good thing') financially. Peace treaties imposed on defeated countries not only provided for maintaining of Napoleon's troops on their territory (food and shelter), but included the payment of massive indemnities: Prussia was

Key question

What factors contributed to Napoleon's military success between 1803 and 1807?

Grande Armée

Napoleon's renamed army after 1805. At its largest in 1812 it numbered over 600,000 men, among them Poles, Italians, Swiss and Bavarians.

Key term

forced to find 311 million francs after being defeated at Jena in 1806. War had become satisfactorily self-financing.

- The only consistent theme running through the years from 1800 to 1815 was his hatred for Britain. Following the defeat of his invasion plan in 1805, Napoleon adopted another strategy to try to defeat Britain. He planned to destabilise the British economy by means of the continental system. This system envisaged blockading British trade by denying it access to European markets. The continental system had an important consequence for the war since it meant the need for further conquests to try to close mainland Europe to British exports.
- The weakness of Napoleon's enemies – Britain, Russia, Austria and later Prussia – formed a series of anti-French alliances with each other, but these were continually undermined by their mutual suspicions and jealousy. Only Britain remained opposed to France for the whole period. The other three powers were tempted away from time to time by Napoleon's offers of territory.

4 | The Defeat and Downfall of the Empire

From the height of his power in Europe in early 1810, Napoleon and his Empire collapsed in spectacular fashion. Two events in particular played a crucial role in contributing to Napoleon's downfall: the Peninsular War (1808–14) and the invasion of Russia in 1812.

Key question

Why and with what consequences did Napoleon become involved in the Peninsular War?

The Peninsular War

To try to secure the defeat of Britain Napoleon decided to enforce the continental system (see page 201) much more rigorously. In 1808 he invaded and occupied the Papal States in an attempt to force the Pope to impose this strategy. However, British goods were continuing to enter Europe via their long-standing ally, Portugal. The value of British exports entering Europe through Portuguese ports actually doubled between 1808 and 1809 to nearly £1 million, and by 1811 the annual total had increased to more than £6 million. Portugal's more powerful neighbour Spain, was a country very much in decline whose government and vast overseas empire in the Americas were ruled very inefficiently. To ensure the continental system was fully enforced, and to stop British imports entering the **Iberian peninsula**, Napoleon on 5 May 1808 deposed the Spanish king and his heir, and placed his own brother Joseph on the throne. There were a number of consequences to this decision:

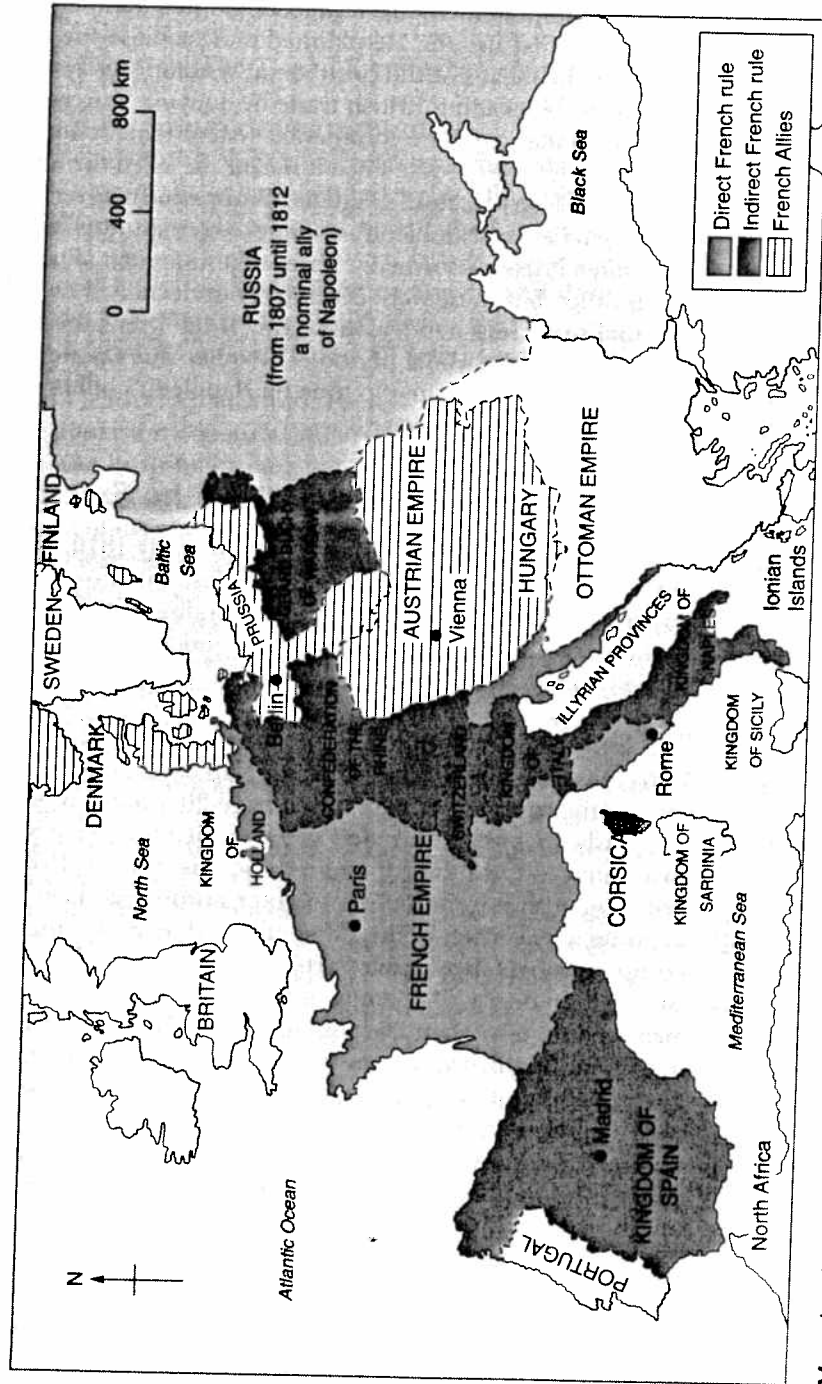
- Large numbers of ordinary Spanish people rose in revolt against French rule.
- Maintaining garrisons in Spain proved to be a significant drain on French military resources.
- The Franco-Spanish attack on Portugal prompted Britain to commit military forces to defend its ally.

Key term

Iberian peninsula
Spain and Portugal combined.

Key date

Forced abdication of the King of Spain and the beginning of the Peninsular War:
5 May 1808



Map showing Europe in 1810 when Napoleon's Grand Empire was at its height

- Napoleon's inability to resolve the situation cast doubts on his military and political judgement.

As soon as Joseph arrived in Spain in May 1808 he was confronted by a revolt in Madrid which was put down by the French with great ferocity. A hundred Spaniards were executed in retaliation for the killing of 31 Frenchmen. The artist Goya's horrific images helped rouse the whole population to patriotic anger against the French occupying forces (see below). Local resistance committees (*juntas*) were set up, coordinated by the clergy and members of the nobility, to raise guerrilla fighters and regular soldiers. A small and comparatively inexperienced French army was defeated at Baylen by a force of Spanish regular troops. The sensation created by this defeat brought Napoleon himself to Spain with 100,000 veterans of the *Grande Armée*. A British expeditionary force was dispatched to the peninsula in answer to a Spanish request for help and quickly drove the French out of Portugal.

The campaign fought in the Iberian Peninsula over the next six years was a brutal guerrilla war (see page 97). In 1812 it was estimated that there were between 33,000 and 50,000 Spanish irregular forces engaged in the campaign against Napoleon. The arrival of the Duke of Wellington in Portugal in 1808 provided a



The Disasters of War: Heroic feat! Against the dead! created by Francisco Goya in the period 1810–14. Goya was the first modern artist to use the power of visual images to depict the horrific reality of war and to bring this to a large audience.

substantial boost to the anti-French campaign. Wellington's army numbered some 35,000 men and, because they lacked both artillery and cavalry, they relied heavily on guerrilla forces. He proved to be a formidable opponent, and although a cautious commander he was able to exploit French weaknesses regarding lack of supplies while at the same time fully utilising British naval supremacy to re-supply and reinforce his own forces. In 1810–11 Marshal Massena attacked Lisbon, failed in his objective and suffered 25,000 casualties in the process. As Wellington shrewdly observed in 1811, there were 353,000 French troops in Spain and yet they had no authority beyond the spot where they stood.

Wellington made little impact on the general European conflict. Britain was unable to prevent the defeat of Austria in 1809 or the invasion of Russia in 1812. In the wake of France's military commitment and disasters in Russia however, Wellington moved on the offensive. In 1812 he captured Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz. Following the defeat of Marmont at Salamanca he entered Madrid. Northern Spain was liberated in 1813 following his victory at Vittoria. French forces were driven back across the Pyrenees and finally defeated at Toulouse in 1814. The war in Spain was never popular in France. French military prestige was eroded during the long drawn out campaign against guerrillas, which was both expensive and demoralising. It is aptly called the 'Spanish ulcer'.

Spanish ulcer

Used by Napoleon as a term for a wound that weakens the victim without ever being fatal.

Key term

The invasion of Russia 1812

The improved relations between France and Russia that the treaty of Tilsit in 1807 brought about proved to be difficult to maintain, and both sides felt uncomfortable about the relationship. A number of issues caused friction between the two countries and led to a resumption of hostilities. The main factors that led to conflict were:

- Mutual distrust of each other's hostile expansionist aims in the Baltic, central Europe and the Balkans.
- Napoleon's refusal to support the Tsar's ambitions to seize Istanbul.
- Alexander attacked Sweden with French encouragement, but without French agreement seized and annexed Swedish Finland.
- There were arguments over the future of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw.
- The main disagreement arose over the Tsar's virtual withdrawal from the continental blockade. On the last day of 1810 he introduced a new trade tariff that discriminated against France and in favour of Britain.

Of these factors the determination to enforce the continental blockade was essential. The army Napoleon gathered to invade Russia was the largest he had ever assembled. It was also one of the most cosmopolitan forces created since the time of the crusades in the twelfth century. The *Grande Armée* of 600,000 consisted of Germans, Swiss, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, Poles

Key question

Why did Napoleon invade Russia in 1812?

Key date

Napoleon invaded
Russia: 22 June 1812

Key term

Scorched earth
A policy of
destroying all food
and shelter in front
of an invading army
to deny them
essential supplies.

Key question

What were the
consequences of the
retreat from Moscow?

and Lithuanians. Only about 270,000 of the total were Frenchmen. Napoleon had never before commanded such a large force, over such a vast area. During the course of the campaign he was inexplicably indecisive and lethargic at critical moments.

On 22 June 1812, without any declaration of war, Napoleon crossed the River Niemen. He was unable to use his usual strategy of luring the enemy towards him, and forcing a decisive battle early in the campaign. The much smaller Russian armies continually retreated before him destroying food supplies as they went. Napoleon was therefore drawn ever deeper into Russia, extending his supply lines and increasing the difficulties for his large, slow-moving force of catching up with the enemy. The Russian army's **scorched earth** tactic meant that Napoleon found it difficult to feed his men and horses. By the time Napoleon reached the outskirts of Moscow on 7 September the Russians decided to stand and fight. In a day-long battle of enormous ferocity, Napoleon won a victory of sorts, after a prolonged artillery duel, but at great cost in men and guns. The French lost 30,000 men, and the Russians 50,000. On 14 September Napoleon's advance guard rode into a largely deserted and burning Moscow. The Tsar refused to negotiate despite the loss of Moscow.

The retreat from Moscow

The unusually mild autumn tempted Napoleon to linger in Moscow for over a month. He ignored the warnings of bad weather to come, and only the eventual realisation that the *Grande Armée* would starve to death if he stayed longer in the ruined and empty city caused him to order a return home. Laden with loot and slowed down by their wounded, the army began the retreat on 19 October, which became one of the greatest military disasters of Napoleon's career. Sickness and skirmishes, famine and exhaustion took their toll, and the onset of the severe Russian winter made any problems significantly worse. The *Grande Armée* was effectively destroyed. Only 25,000 survived to reach Germany by the end of 1812. The fragility of the imperial government was exposed by the Malet affair (22–3 October 1812) when a plot by a former general almost succeeded in persuading some key officials that the Emperor was dead and a provisional government needed to be formed. But the ruse failed to convince everyone and the plotters were arrested and quickly executed.

There were a number of factors which help explain Napoleon's defeat in Russia. The *Grande Armée* was lost through a combination of bad management, poor supply arrangements, lack of local knowledge, and over-confidence. Napoleon had allowed himself nine weeks to defeat Russia and return in triumph to Germany. His army had only summer clothing and enough food for three weeks (he intended to be comfortably ensconced in Moscow as Emperor of the East by then). Many supplies proved inadequate or non-existent. There was no fodder for the horses, nor frost nails for their shoes, no maps covering more than a few miles inside the Russian border, and no

bandages for the wounded. There was unusual confusion in the French army command, too. General Caulincourt wrote after leaving Moscow, 'Never was a retreat worse planned, or carried out with less discipline; never did convoys march so badly ... To lack of forethought we owed a great part of our disaster.'

The final campaigns 1813–15

The Russian disaster encouraged Napoleon's enemies to construct a new anti-French coalition. Although this was not a formal alliance, by late summer 1813, for the first time *all* the Great Powers, Britain, Russia, Prussia and Austria, were at war with Napoleon. In October the numerical superiority of the combined armies of Austria, Prussia and Russia enabled them to win a decisive but expensive victory at Leipzig in the three-day 'Battle of the Nations'. Outnumbered, Napoleon was heavily defeated and forced back to the Rhine. His influence in Germany gone, the Grand Empire was starting to unravel. The members of the fourth coalition agreed a formal alliance through the Treaty of Chaumont in March 1814. This treaty, which converted the coalition into a Quadruple Alliance, committed each of the four powers not to conclude a separate peace but to fight on until Napoleon was defeated.

In France there was discontent and opposition to the war as preparations began in bitter winter weather for a new campaign. Napoleon set to work to raise yet another army and to find the money to equip it. The financial situation was desperate, and the burden of conscription had become intolerable in a country that had been at war for 20 years. Despite the fact that for the first time since 1792 France was facing invasion by the 'kings' of old Europe, the country was war weary and there was no real enthusiasm for continuing the struggle. Despite a series of small victories Napoleon was unable to prevent his enemies from entering Paris in March 1814. He abdicated in favour of his young son, but the allies restored the Bourbons with Louis XVIII becoming the new king. The terms of Napoleon's future were settled by the Treaty of Fontainebleau. Napoleon was granted the sovereignty of the Island of Elba and a pension.

The Hundred Days

Following Napoleon's abdication the future of France and its Empire was discussed at Vienna. Differences between the victorious allies emerged regarding the post-war settlement. Napoleon, sensing an opportunity to split the allies and recover his throne, left Elba and landed in France to launch a new campaign which lasted 100 days. He immediately gathered together an army of former soldiers. His immediate targets were the two allied armies in Belgium under Wellington and the Prussian General, Blücher. Napoleon hoped to defeat them before they could combine with significant numbers of Austrian and Russian forces heading towards France. On 18 June 1815 one of the decisive battles in European history was fought near the Belgian village of Waterloo. Napoleon had a slight numerical

Key question
Why did Napoleon's invasion of Russia fail?

Key question
How was Napoleon finally defeated?

Battle of Waterloo:
18 June 1815

Key date

advantage over Wellington, 72,000 men to 68,000. The outcome of this evenly balanced struggle was ultimately determined in favour of the allies by the arrival of the Prussians. As Wellington said the next day 'it was a damned close thing – the nearest run thing you ever saw in your life'. Napoleon's hopes of continuing the campaign were dashed when he failed to secure further support. Without political or popular support he had no option but to agree to demands for his second abdication. On 8 July Louis XVIII made his second entry into Paris. After Napoleon's final abdication and exile in June, the second Treaty of Paris (November 1815) reduced the frontiers of France beyond the proposals of the previous year, to those of 1790. The First Empire was finally at an end.

Key question

To what extent did Napoleon preserve the Revolution?

Assessing Napoleon's impact on France

There is a measure of agreement that France changed less in the Napoleonic period than during the shorter Revolutionary one. In many ways aspects of his regime resembled the *ancien régime*:

- Governmental and administrative reforms replaced the popular sovereignty of the Revolution (loosely controlled, devolved government based on a system of elections) with a centralised autocratic rule not unlike that of the *ancien régime*, especially after the establishment of the Empire in 1804.
- Legal and judicial reforms were based on the authoritarianism of Roman law.
- The suppression of freedom of expression and his extension of police powers smacked more of the Bourbon monarchy than of the Revolution (with the exception of the Jacobin dictatorship).
- Opposition was vigorously rooted out. Life was geared to the service of the State and its ruler in a way never previously seen in France, even in the time of Louis XIV.
- By the Concordat the Catholic Church was restored to a position of power and influence in the state with few exceptions as it had been during the *ancien régime*.
- Although for administrative purposes the departments of the revolution were retained, he reintroduced the 40,000 pre-1789 communes as the basic territorial and 'electoral' unit.
- A central role in local government during the Napoleonic era was the prefect, who although he resembled the *intendant* of the *ancien régime*, had in reality far more power.
- During the Revolution the nobility and all ranks and status had been abolished, but under Napoleon a new imperial nobility was created and the Legion of Honour recreated a hierarchy of ranks.

Despite the authoritarian nature of his regime, Napoleon *did* maintain the great gains of the Revolution. He confirmed in the constitution and the Civil Code, the end of feudalism in France and the equality of Frenchmen before the law, and in the Concordat the irrevocability of the sale of the *biens nationaux* (see page 55).

In a number of areas the Napoleonic era did not significantly transform France, although the country did change. The most notable feature of Napoleon's rule was the almost continuous period of war: unbroken after 1803 until his overthrow in 1815. This had a profound impact on the country in a number of areas:

Key question
To what extent had Napoleon transformed France by 1815?

- *Society.* The wars had a dramatic effect on French population. The 916,000 killed (out of two million in the army) between 1800 and 1814 represented about 7 per cent of the total population of France. They were, however, mostly young men of marriageable age – a devastating 38 per cent of men born in the years 1790–5 were killed, the majority of them between 1812 and 1814. To the extent that this must have left many young women without husbands, and have reduced further the already declining birth rate, Napoleon's wars must accept some responsibility for the slow growth of the population in nineteenth-century France.
- *The economy.* Behind the protection of the continental system, French industry did expand slowly during Napoleon's rule albeit from a rather low base. Textile production increased as did the iron and coal industry. Trade with continental Europe certainly expanded. Across industry as a whole there is little evidence that by 1815 France was on the verge of an industrial revolution of the kind experienced in Britain.
- *Culture.* Even allowing for the stifling effect of his policies of propaganda and indoctrination, Napoleon was not much concerned with the arts, literature, sculpture, painting or drama, except in so far as they glorified himself. He closed down most of the theatres in Paris. Paris itself changed little under Napoleon. Apart from the addition of a number of triumphal monuments in classical style – the Arc de Triomphe itself, and the column in the Place Vendôme that bears a statue of Napoleon in a toga. The style of the years 1800–15, was known as 'Empire' (perhaps to emphasise the importance of official art), and is seen at its most distinctive in the context of interior decoration where it directly reflects Napoleon's own interests, inspired from the classical world of Greece and Rome or from Egypt.
- *The frontiers of France.* At the height of the Empire in 1811 Napoleon controlled, either directly or through his allies and satellites, most of mainland Europe. The prestige of having the largest European empire since that of Rome counted for little when the first Treaty of Paris (1814) pushed the frontiers of France back to those of 1792, the second Treaty of Paris pushed them back to 1790. There was nothing left of the imperial possessions. Even the 'natural frontiers' were lost. In territorial terms no trace of the Empire survived.

Some key books on Napoleon

R.S. Alexander, *Napoleon* (Arnold, 2001).

Geoffrey Ellis, *Napoleon* (Longman, 1997).

Martyn Lyons, *Napoleon Bonaparte and the Legacy of the French Revolution* (Macmillan, 1994).